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A Conceptual Model of Culture-Based English Learning Materials in Indonesia

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Abstract. The purpose of this research was to create a culture-based English learning model for use in junior high schools. This study was part of a larger research project that used a research and development (R&D) design. In the first year, the project aims to create a conceptual model of culture-based English learning materials. This study was conducted at Muhammadiyah 1 Junior High School in Ponorogo, East Java province, Indonesia. Muhammadiyah is one of the biggest Islamic non-governmental organizations in Indonesia. We chose this school due to its easy access and low motivation levels of its students in learning English. Sample selection was conducted using a multi-stage sampling technique. The data were collected using questionnaires, document analysis, and interviews, and triangulated using expert judgment. The results of the data analysis led to the production of a conceptual model of English learning material which contains core competencies, basic competencies, themes, or materials of English for junior high school students. The result of the interviews with the students and teachers during need analysis indicated that it is necessary to include local culture in English learning materials to increase students' engagement and knowledge about their culture. The results of the product try-out showed that students are motivated because they are familiar with the culture-based learning materials. As such, this conceptual model will be the basis to develop similar modules of English learning materials for junior high school students.

Keywords: conceptual model; culture-based; English learning

1. Introduction

Culture-based English learning plays a crucial role in assisting students in junior high school to learn English, because it provides a new learning atmosphere for students and convenience in learning English as a foreign language. In addition, in culture-based learning, the themes and subthemes of the learning material are adapted to the local culture of students. Furthermore, the learning materials are adjusted to the level and capacity of students to eliminate any difficulties during the teaching-learning process (Fatihaturosyidah & Septiana, 2019). To achieve maximum learning outcomes, the teacher's role in providing culturally loaded material is very important. Teachers need to be able to present fun learning so that learners will enjoy learning more (Torro et al., 2021). In other words, it is hoped that teachers will be able to choose appropriate and effective learning strategies to organize and regulate the course of the learning process to make learning persuasive, active, creative, empathic, and interesting (Fakhrurrazi, 2018).

Second or foreign language learning strategies for beginners ought to be directed at the achievement of competence and reliance (Nurchasanah, 2017). Moreover, the target of language learning is acquisition and not simply learning the language (Kholid, 2017). Language acquisition is a process of acquiring and mastering a language naturally, because humans need to communicate with others (Oktora, 2015). This means that learners (mainly those who are at the novice level) perceive learning as pleasurable so that it instills in them a desire to study constantly in sundry contexts (not just in the classroom) and not just under the supervision of the teacher (Febriana, 2021). Mainly, the English learning materials used at schools ought to be able to encourage learners to keep on learning and expand their learning process outside the classroom by employing culture-based aspects with real-life experiences (Husain, 2016). Competence in English at this first level is very important and strategic because it is the basis of learning for English language learning at further levels. In addition, mistakes that might occur because of deviations in the learning process will be carried along by learners for life and influence their subsequent English learning (Syahputra, 2015).

Culture-based English learning for children in Ponorogo, Indonesia is very beneficial, yet such learning models which can be used by teachers for instruction in the teaching-learning process are unavailable. Considering this, and the importance of such model, this study aimed to develop a conceptual learning model based on Ponorogo culture (Besral, 2016). We expected that this study were to yield meaningful benefits not only for teachers but also for other stakeholders so that English language learning can gain its proper place professionally (Alim, 2017).

One of the positive values that needs to be instilled in learners in junior high school is love for the motherland (Ikhsan, 2017). The current reality shows that many of the young generations today have begun to lose their sense of love for the homeland (Atika et al., 2019), a state attributed to the negative influence of Western culture (Nuryani et al., 2020). Adoration of the motherland mirrors feelings of glory, fidelity, concern, and high honor for aspects such as language, culture, economy, and politics to prevent persons from being lured by what other

countries can offer, which can threaten love for the motherland (Erviana, 2021). The main cause of the loss of love for the homeland by the Indonesian people is that the values of Pancasila (Indonesia's five principles) are only perceived and used as history (Suraya et al., 2020). The majority of Indonesian citizens just memorize the Pancasila orally but do not practice its values in their daily life (Marhayani & Indraswati, 2020).

Students need to be exposed to values such as love for their motherland from an early stage so that the next generation can manifest good attitudes and behaviors that are beneficial for the community to avoid social deviations that damage norms (Baginda, 2018). Deviations can harm society and even the feeling of love for the motherland. Deviations can threaten the nationalism that people feel and the pride of being part of Indonesia with its varied culture (Saputra et al., 2019). If young generations do not care about their culture, for example *Reyog Ponorogo* (a performing art dance with a lion-headed person with peacock feather decoration), people from other countries will probably claim it as theirs. The young generations must thus prevent this from happening and should therefore know it better than those from other countries (Asri, 2018). In essence, all members of society, including junior high school students, are expected to be prudent in loving the local culture of their community, especially for the sake of preserving culture (Dinarti et al., 2021).

In the Indonesian context, junior high school is the level of formal basic education after going through the elementary school level (Bafadhhol, 2017). In general, students of this level of education are 13 to 15 years old (Wardah, 2018). Teaching and learning at the junior high school level focus on establishing generations that are ready to take on a progressively complicated era (Kristi et al., 2020). This is in line with the Law on the National Education System (No. 20 of 2003) Article 17 concerning basic education, which consists of elementary schools and junior high schools (Bhara, 2020). If a country wishes to go forward in the sector of education, it has to give a chance to and provide enough facilities for students to develop their skills and interests (Mustaghfiroh, 2020). The potential and skills of learners can be developed through a learning process in which the learning materials are interesting for students. In addition, teachers should have a suitable teaching strategy to convey the learning materials (Lena et al., 2020). This will help learners to obtain knowledge and skills to tackle future challenges in a good and fun learning atmosphere (Mardhiyah et al., 2021).

Since Ponorogo is one of the tourist destinations in Indonesia, the children of Ponorogo need to have better English language competence than children living in other areas (Kusuma, 2018). They also need to learn many things related to their culture and the tourist spots of Ponorogo. One way to achieve this objective is to create culture-based learning materials for English classes. However, several factors hinder students to achieve this objective. These include the absence of Ponorogo culture-based learning materials, the broad themes existing in students' textbooks, students' low motivation, and teachers' incapacity to develop the needed learning materials (Utiahman, 2020).

To achieve this, core competencies and basic competencies need to be adjusted to the cultural conditions in Ponorogo because attaining foreign language competence will be very effective if it is carried out based on culture (Abusyairi, 2013). Nonetheless, in Ponorogo, English language competence and understanding of Ponorogo culture have not yet been implemented in English learning materials (Ahmad & Mardiana, 2014).

Through the development of this culture-based English learning conceptual model, it is hoped that junior high school students can learn not only English but also their own culture. This study also supported the study excellence of the Muhammadiyah University of Ponorogo in the field of developing local cultural arts and education so that it is included in the prominent applied research schemes of universities. As such, the objectives of this study were to:

- determine the process of developing a culture-based English learning conceptual model as a means to instill love for the motherland for junior high school students;
- develop a conceptual model of culture-based English learning as a medium to instill love for the motherland for junior high school students; and
- determine the effectiveness of a conceptual model of culture-based English learning as a medium to instill love for the motherland for junior high school students.

Previous studies related to culturally loaded learning materials have shown that the presence of students' culture in textbooks has a positive impact on students' motivation. Students enjoy the learning materials because they feel that they are familiar with the contents, even though it is not written in their native language. As a result, culturally loaded learning materials can enable students to think critically to improve performance of English language learning and increase classroom interaction (Prayati et al., 2020). Other research has indicated that teachers must provide learning materials that can trigger students to be proud of their local identity (Elshadelin & Yumarnamto, 2020). Therefore, culture-based learning materials are necessary to help students achieve their learning objectives.

2. Methodology

This study used a modified research and development (R&D) design of the ADDIE model, which consists of analyzing, designing, developing, implementing, and evaluating phases (Branch, 2009). The analyzing phase aims to identify a certain problem and its causes that affect students' poor English proficiency. The designing phase aims to verify the desired performances and appropriate testing methods. Next, the developing phase is used to generate and validate the learning resources that will be required during the process of arranging learning material. The next phase, the implementing phase, gives a chance for learning material developers to prepare the learning environment and engage the students. The last phase, the evaluating phase, is needed to assess the quality of the instructional products and processes, both before and after implementation. Overall, this study is part of a larger research project that is being conducted for three years and consists of three stages, namely theoretical assessment of English language competence and model development,

development of textbooks, and field testing. This study is the result of research that yields a conceptual model in the first year of the larger project, which will later be developed in the form of a textbook in the first stage.

2.1 Research Participants

The study population consisted of Muhammadiyah junior high schools in the Ponorogo Regency. A “multi-step sampling technique” was adopted by considering schools in urban and rural areas. On the whole, because of time and energy constraints, the sample included six schools, two in each subdistrict, consisting of schools in urban and rural areas. The schools were SMP (junior high school) Muhammadiyah 1 Ponorogo, SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Ponorogo, MTs (Islamic junior high school) Muhammadiyah 1 Babadan, MTs Muhammadiyah 2 Jenangan, MTs Muhammadiyah 3 Yanggong, and MTs Muhammadiyah 4 Jetis.

2.2 Instruments

In this study, data were collected by using questionnaires, document analysis, and interviews. The questionnaires and interviews were administered to students and teachers to investigate the need analysis and their opinions and suggestions after the process of product try-out. Document analysis was conducted to determine the availability of suitable textbooks and the students’ performance in learning English. Furthermore, to verify the data, an expert judgment process was carried out using a designated expert. The expert judgment phase included the validation from an expert in English learning materials and an expert in graphic design. A senior experienced English teacher examined the developed learning materials in terms of language, content, and presentation appropriateness. The other expert, a computer lecturer, examined the developed learning materials in terms of layout and graphic design.

2.3 Data Analysis

The obtained data were analyzed descriptively and qualitatively. The data were then used as basis to develop a model whose conception follows the concept of Castleberry and Nolen (2018). Therefore, in this research, the obtained data were processed by implementing five steps: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. In the compiling phase, we collected data from the interviews, questionnaires, and observations to obtain a full picture of the conditions and situation. Next, the obtained data were separated into their specific classifications. In this phase, the findings can be identified more easily and in detail. After that, the data were compiled again. This is necessary to do to obtain a full description of the research evidence. After analyzing the data in detail and as a whole set, several important findings were derived. Finally, we drew conclusions related to the findings of the research.

3. Results and Analysis

As stated earlier, to obtain valid and effective results, and to confirm the reliability and validity of the results, the data were tested by experts in a related field. The result of the conceptual model contained the following factors: (1) competency standards for English language learning in junior high schools, (2) core

competencies, (3) English learning themes, (4) approach, (5) English learning methods/techniques, and (6) assessment. The results are elaborated below.

3.1 Competency Standards and Core Competencies for Learning English

Competency standards are competencies that can be performed or displayed for a subject or competence in certain subjects that must be possessed by students; or competencies that must be possessed by graduates in a subject (Prihantoro, 2014). According to Sellar et al. (2018), competency standards refer to the minimum competencies in certain subjects that must be possessed by graduates.

Regarding the competency standards in the Indonesian school context, data analysis revealed that for semester 1, Class VII had two competency standards and twenty-one core competencies, consisting of two core competencies for listening skills, four for speaking skills, two for reading skills, and two for writing skills. In the second semester, the competency standards consisted of two core competencies for listening skills, five for speaking skills, two for reading skills, and two for writing skills. In Class VIII, for semester 1 and 2, there were two competency standards and twenty-six core competencies, comprising three core competencies for listening skills, five for speaking skills, two for reading skills, and three for writing skills. In Class IX, for semester 1, there were two competency standards and twenty-five core competencies, consisting of four core competencies for listening skills, four for speaking skills, two for reading skills, and three for writing skills. Semester 2 had three core competencies for listening skills, four for speaking skills, three for reading skills, and two for writing skills.

3.2 English Learning Material Themes

The theme is the main idea. The themes and subthemes of the subject matter are the main ideas used as the basis for learning in certain subjects that are associated with culture-based English learning to create a teaching and learning process that is suitable for expected learning objectives.

Themes and subthemes are taught at the junior high school level of the participating schools to achieve the competency standards and core competencies as stated above. These are shown in Table 1. Cultural elements are inserted into the relevant sections by incorporating material with local culture content into the lesson theme. The insertion process is carried out in such a way by using the “melting pot” paradigm (Arend, 2003), that is by fusing local culture content into the topic of the core material so that it does not feel like material separately inserted.

Table 1: List of themes for English learning materials in junior high schools

Theme		
Class VII	Class VIII	Class IX
Greetings	It's English time	Congratulations!
Who I am	We can do it, and we will do it	Let's live a healthy life!
Telling the time	We know what to do	Be healthy, be happy
My daily activities	Come to my birthday, please!	This is how you do it!
A nice day	I'm so happy for you!	Everybody is always in the middle of something

Let's like what we do	Our busy roads	We have been to an orphan home. We went there last Sunday.
I'm proud of Ponorogo	My uncle is a zookeeper	Sangkuriang (Name of an Indonesian folktale character)
That's what our classmates should do	What are you doing?	They are made in Indonesia
	Bigger is not always better	What is it?
	When I was a child	Come and visit us!
	Yes, we made it!	You can always come back home
	Don't forget, please!	
	We got a lot of histories	

All the themes in the list above relate to things that are around students in the context of their lives. Piaget (1936), a child developmental psychologist, explained that learning for children is a product of self-adaptation to the environment that occurs on an ongoing basis. This statement reflects that children will learn effectively if they see the continuity or relevance of what they are learning in real-life contexts. There are two basic concepts in children's learning, namely assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation is the process whereby children adopt something new (seen, heard, or read) in a real context or combine something new (knowledge, information, or image) with something that they already have. Conversely, accommodation is a process of empowering the mind to understand something new either by creating an image or comparing something new with prior knowledge. By using materials related to themselves and the surrounding environment, the processes of assimilation and accommodation of concepts become easier for students, thus making English learning more effective for teachers and students.

4. Discussion

4.1 Approaches and Methods of Learning English

An approach is a procedure used by teachers to direct students' activities towards the goals to be achieved. A method, on the other hand, is a systematic way of working to simplify the application of activity to reach designated purposes (Quested et al., 2017). The method includes procedural, systematic, and logical elements and planned activities to achieve the targeted goals. The method also comprises the choice and definition of teaching materials, the probability of obtaining solutions, and expanding these teaching materials.

Several approaches and methods were used by teachers in teaching the junior high school students. Teachers chose one or more methods according to the characteristics of students, teaching materials, the environment, and other learning resources. Based on the results from the data analysis, a suitable approach to use is a communicative approach that can be described through several specific learning methods. Principally, all of the methods train and invite students to use language in the form of real communication in real life. With the principle of communicative learning, teachers can develop various kinds of

activities according to learning objectives, topics, and subject matter so that students can gain experience by communicating in English. Students can do several activities to improve their language skills, all of which provide opportunities for students to use English in a real and communicative way. Some of the methods that can be used are total physical response, presentation practice production, three phases of listening, three phases of reading, games, and songs.

All of these methods endorse student-centered learning (often associated with discovery learning, inquiry learning, or inductive learning), which places greater emphasis on the role of learners in the learning process (Brookes et al., 2020). In student-centered learning, the teacher does not give complete freedom to the students. On the contrary, the teacher still makes plans, but their role in and control over the teaching and learning process are greatly reduced. The philosophy underlying the student-centered approach is that the focus is on the students. When planning their lesson strategies, teachers first formulate outcomes and then design instructional activities to suit learners' background knowledge, motivation, and level of readability (Neumann, 2013). They assess obtainable materials and select presentation strategies to connect with their students' characteristics and level of English proficiency. For this process, teachers are also required to transform their ideas continually based on the responses and try to maintain stability between providing learners the information they require and the freedom they desire.

The emphasis of learning is on students. When planning their lesson strategies, teachers must first determine the outcomes to be achieved, and then design learning activities that are suitable for their students' understanding, prior knowledge, motivations, and interests. Teachers must examine and evaluate the learning materials and choose the right strategies to transfer the knowledge to their students. Teachers must also change their ideas on an ongoing basis based on the input received and attempt to strike a balance between providing the guidance and assistance students need and the freedom they desire. If the learning outcomes of the objectives are to be achieved, it is necessary to select the right learning strategy. For this, teachers must determine how to organize their students' learning environment so that their learning experience can direct them to achieve the desired learning outcomes. Therefore, teachers must be able to select the most suitable teaching strategies for their students to achieve their learning objectives optimally.

No strategy is better than any other strategy in all respects. Therefore, teachers must be able to select the appropriate teaching strategy and make rational decisions if the selected strategy is effective. Teachers may have a favorite strategy, but importantly, no strategy is right for all situations, so variety and flexibility in teaching will help teachers hold their students' attention and improve their learning outcomes (Chalmers & Fuller, 1996). To choose the right strategy, teachers should ask themselves two questions: What do I want the students to do as a result of my teaching? and: What is the best way to help the students learn? These questions will direct teachers to reflect on the outcomes that must be achieved by the students, the content or learning materials that students must

learn, and the learning process they will undergo. This refers to the philosophy that knowledge is a form, not something that is discovered. The teacher's role is to introduce new ways to acquire knowledge through the process of social learning (Pritchard & Woollard, 2010). Teachers should facilitate their students to learn through a set of experiences rather than simply giving them experiences.

4.2 Language Learning Assessment

Assessment is defined as a procedure used to obtain information about a person's achievement or performance, where the results will be used for evaluation. Assessment is done to determine the level of a person's performance or achievement. The required information is obtained from data through test and non-test activities (Maman & Rajab, 2016). The assessment used in learning English in junior high schools is competency-based (in the form of tests and non-tests). Competency-based assessments differ from other assessment methods in several ways and generally have specific characteristics. These are: (1) a focus on competence, (2) carried out for each individual, (3) not comparing individuals' success with one another, (4) allowing students to conduct self-evaluation, (5) being open, holistic, integrative, and authentic, (6) graduation is obtained if all the main competency standards or criteria have been achieved, and (7) graduation is categorized into one of two categories, namely competent or incompetent.

In a competency-based assessment, a person is declared to have passed if they have mastered all the required competencies. If one (or more) of the main competencies has not been mastered yet, the person concerned is declared incompetent.

In the assessment process in the classroom, authentic assessment is used as one of a variety of assessment forms that reflects the student's learning progress, motivational abilities, and attitudes towards relevant learning activities in the classroom (Aliningsih & Sofwan, 2015). The term *authentic assessment*, which includes the idea of assessing learners in implementing knowledge and skills in the same manner as they experience in the obvious realm outside the classroom, was first introduced by Sumirattana et al. (2017). The types of authentic assessment include performance assessment, portfolio, and self-assessment.

Assessment also involves the different forms of assessment used to assess students' competencies. The test as a form of assessment is a set of questions or tasks planned to obtain answers or provisions that are considered correct. In other words, a test wishes to establish whether students consider information true or false. The non-test technique involves using an instrument intended to elicit an opinion about a certain topic. Although the results of the data analysis showed that competency-based assessments in the form of tests (which are performance tests) and non-tests are considered the most appropriate for use in junior high schools, assessment in the form of objective tests can still be used. According to Adom et al. (2020), objective tests are not good at judging a person's knowledge but they are not bad at doing so either. The objective test is thus not the best at measuring students' abilities and is thus not a suitable assessment form to be used. Nonetheless, it can still be used in certain situations.

The aforementioned discussion shows that learning English for children requires teachers' serious attention and special skills. In this study, Ponorogo cultural elements were inserted into English language learning material according to learning themes. This was done so that students can appropriately and professionally learn English language with the nuances of the Ponorogo culture.

5. Conclusion

This study showed how a culture-based English learning model can be developed by inserting local culture elements into the learning material. Conceptually, the insertion of local culture elements is not explicitly visible because the insertion is adjusted to the theme or learning materials being taught. The inserted learning material is melted in (with the melting pot paradigm) so that the material will not be presented separately. However, the inserted material will become clear and real at the applicative level, actualized in textbooks (which will be done in the second year) and in the implementation process in the classroom. Culture-based English learning materials will play a crucial role in English learning for junior high schools and provide a new atmosphere for learners and convenience in learning English as a foreign language. This is because the material in the themes and subthemes is adapted to match the local culture of students. In addition, other learning components are also adjusted to the level and capacity of students.

To obtain maximum learning outcomes, the teacher's role in providing culturally loaded material is very important. Teachers need to be able to present fun learning activities so that learners will enjoy their learning more. In other words, it is hoped that teachers will be able to choose appropriate and effective learning strategies to organize and direct the course of the learning process to present persuasive, active, creative, empathic, and interesting learning.

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